

Opening remarks at the National Press Club Newsmaker event

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Thank you, Peter.

I am delighted to share the podium with Commissioner Damanaki today. She is a true visionary, a courageous woman, and a strong partner who is committed to an ambitious but achievable vision that I share: productive and sustainable fisheries from healthy oceans.

Commissioner Damanaki's presence in Washington sends two powerful messages: (1) pirate fishing poses a grave threat to international security, global prosperity and sustainable fisheries and (2) defeating pirate fishing and achieving sustainable fisheries will require sustained international partnerships. Commissioner Damanaki and I stand here today as partners - the EU and U.S. — partners committed to working together to eradicate pirate fishing and end unsustainable fishing practices.

IUU FISHING

Let me focus on 'pirate fishing' first. Formally known as 'illegal, unreported, or unregulated fishing', or 'IUU fishing' for short, pirate fishing hauls in between 11 and 26 million tons of seafood annually and may represent as much as 40% of the total catch in some fisheries.

Pirate fishing is a global problem, one that undermines efforts to achieve healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries.

Later this morning, Commissioner Damanaki and I will sign a formal agreement between the US and the EU to strengthening the global effort to combat pirate fishing. The following five reasons provide our

rationale for this unprecedented joint effort:

1. Pirate fishing is an economic threat: it robs hard working, law-abiding fishermen, industries, and their communities of between \$10 billion and \$23 billion in economic activity every year.

As the first and third largest importers of seafood in the world, the EU and U.S. have a global responsibility to ensure that the fish we import is caught sustainably and legally.

Moreover, as major fishing nations and major exporters of seafood, we intend to protect the resource and our fishermen from unfair competition abroad.

2. Pirate fishing threatens food security. Food security is not just about grains and livestock. Seafood is a significant source of protein for nearly 3B people, so we can no longer ignore activities that undermine access to nutritious sources of food. Pirate fishing, especially that focused on developing nations, robs subsistence fishermen and their families and communities of good sources of protein.
3. Pirate fishing endangers legal fishermen's safety and livelihoods. Pirate fishermen are criminals who destroy fishing nets and boats and threaten the lives of legitimate fishermen, especially in developing countries.
4. Pirate fishing causes environmental harm, killing non-target species including turtles and sea birds and destroying habitats such as coral reefs that shelter the young fish and prey species so vital to the health of future fisheries.
5. Finally, pirate fishing undermines courageous and legitimate efforts to manage fisheries sustainably.

In short: IUU fishing robs fishermen, their families, communities, nations and the world of a secure, healthy future. Many fisheries on the high seas and within nations' Exclusive Economic Zones are thought to be on a downward spiral of overfishing. Pirate fishing contributes significantly to this global problem and must be ended.

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

The joint EU-U.S. efforts to combat illegal fishing are a down payment on a larger shared commitment to sustainable fisheries.

Just because fishing might be legal, does not mean it is sustainable.

Our commitment is to ensure that good management and enforcement measures are in place so that fishing is both sustainable and legal.

In Europe, Commissioner Damanaki has proposed the Common Fisheries Policy Reform – innovative and timely modifications to ensure fisheries are sustainable.

Here in the U.S., we are finally turning the corner on fisheries management and reaping the benefits of the landmark legislation, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which revolutionized fishery management.

For far too long, fisheries have been thought of as an inexhaustible resource. Thirty-five years ago, the U.S. Congress recognized that fisheries were not inexhaustible and passed and later strengthened the Magnuson-Stevens Act which lays out the broad framework under which US fisheries are managed today.

As recently as the 1960s, well-respected marine scientists were touting the virtually limitless capacity of the world's oceans to feed humanity. By early 1980s some of our nation's iconic stocks were in trouble and by late 1980s and early 1990s their populations crashed.

Thanks in large part to a strengthened Magnuson-Stevens Act, the 230 most economically important fish stocks have improved steadily over the last decade. Now, during this 35th anniversary year of the original passage of that bold legislation, and after decades of overfishing, we are now turning the corner on sustainable management of U.S. fisheries.

The lesson? Ending overfishing and rebuilding depleted fisheries takes time, persistence and sacrifice, but is possible, and brings significant economic and social benefit.

The key to success? Magnuson-Stevens Act set strict goals and timetables, requires adherence to scientific information, and values precaution when uncertainty exists.

Let me be clear: Implementation of these tough measures has not been quick or easy for fishermen – commercial and recreational – nor has it been easy for regulators.

Yes, we are making excellent progress in achieving the goals of the legislation, but we still have quite a way to go.

Nonetheless, most fishermen and regulators alike share the goal of healthy fisheries that can be sustained for generations and generations.

Without tough rules and commitment by all parties, it is all too easy for short-term pressures to continually undermine good intentions and stymie progress.

Sustainable fisheries is about a better future – a time when fishermen can rely on fishing as a stable income for their families, a time when grandparents and grandkids enjoy the day fishing together out on the water, and a time when fishing communities can count on fishing to help their local economies recover and thrive.

And thanks to past and recent efforts, the sacrifices and discipline are paying off.

FISHERIES OF THE U.S. REPORT

One of NOAA's jobs is to keep a close eye on the Nation's fisheries accounts. Every year NOAA publishes a tally of the nation's fisheries.

Today, NOAA is announcing the release of its Fisheries of the U.S. Report for 2010. This is the annual statistical yearbook. Two highlights provide a snapshot:

1. Three fisheries stocks from the Northeast – Georges Bank haddock, Atlantic pollock and spiny dogfish – have now been rebuilt to healthy levels, bringing to 21 the number that have been rebuilt nationwide since 2000.
2. In 2010, 84 percent of the 253 stocks investigated were fished at a sustainable rate, and 77 percent of the 207 stocks with known population levels were abundant enough to be fished sustainably.

These numbers illustrate encouraging progress, but we have considerable work to do before all U.S. fisheries are fully rebuilt and fished at sustainable levels.

CLOSING

With the work that Commissioner Damanaki has done to put forward a proposal for Common Fisheries policy reform and in our future work together to clamp down on pirate fishing, the U.S. is pleased to be standing with the EU.

The reforms to the Common Fisheries Policy proposed by Commissioner Damanaki will benefit not only fisheries in the EU, but fisheries globally.

I congratulate Commissioner Damanaki for having the courage and vision to put forth such a proposal. If adopted, these reforms will require some sacrifice, but I believe, as has been the case in the United States, these sacrifices will be repaid by much greater rewards. Pulling out of a downward spiral, reversing direction and making steady progress upward is not easy, but it is worth it.

We still have a long, long way to go on sustainable management of the fisheries on a global scale. Targeting IUU fishing brings us a step closer.

BACKUP

STORIES

I've talked with fishermen around the U.S. who are seeing the positive difference that fishery reforms can make. They're seeing it in their pocketbooks, their communities, and their hopes for the future.

When I was in Morro Bay, CA three weeks ago, I talked with young Rob Seitz, a groundfish fisherman who recently moved to Morro Bay. Rob is the face of a new generation of fishermen. Although he comes from a long line of fishermen, Rob almost left fishing behind. But when he learned about the new West Coast trawl catch share program, he saw light at the end of the tunnel. Rob said that, in the past, a lot of fish were damaged – fish he couldn't sell, fish that weren't in the sea - because he'd been trying to catch it fast. He is now fishing smarter, not harder and is optimistic about his future as a fisherman. I talked with another fisherman in Morro Bay, who is part of an experimental program, in which he's fishing hook-and-line instead of trawling. Trawling, he used to get about \$1.80 a pound for black cod. After he made the switch to hook-and-line, he's getting \$5 a pound! Even though he isn't catching as many fish, chefs are clamoring for his superior product. He's fishing hook-and-line because of an

innovative experimental program to see if fishing hook-and-line would increase value and quality.

He doesn't catch as many fish, but these trade-offs are paying off. This strategy allows black cod populations to recover because they're not as many fish taken, yet gives fishermen a better return for their effort. Like Rob, this fisherman is fishing smarter, not harder too.

From these two Morro Bay fishermen and others I've spoken with in Cape Cod, the Carolinas, the Gulf, and Alaska, what I'm hearing is that there are fishermen out there who are benefiting from what NOAA and fishermen have done together to change the dynamics and incentives of fishing, enabling profitable fishing now and profitable fishing tomorrow.

Just like money in a checking account, we can't withdraw more than is renewed or we'll run out altogether. Healthy fish populations and healthy habitats are necessary if withdrawals are to be made on a sustainable basis.

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE TOGETHER

Rebuilding is a joint effort. Together, with fishermen, we are building a better future.

A better future because fishermen have good, stable jobs in good, stable fisheries.

A better future because commercial fishermen, charter boat operators, regional fishery councils, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations are building relationships based on trust.

A better future because good science guides the management of healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries.

And a better future because where uncertainty in information exists, we err on the side of caution, preferring to favor healthy fisheries over collapses.

But building this better future is not easy, especially in tough economic times. It takes courage, hard work, good partners and continual evaluation and adjustments.